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The Educational Demands of Democracy.

*Reprint from the
Report of the Dominion
Educational Association,
August, 1901.*



BY JOHN M. LAR, B. A.
Deputy Minister of Education for Ontario.

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THE EDUCATIONAL DEMANDS OF DEMOCRACY.

By JOHN MILLAR, Esq., B. A.

[Deputy Minister of Education for Ontario.]

When the brotherhood of the race was proclaimed, there dawned upon the world a new civilization. Equality in its proper sense is the foundation of Democracy, and equal rights are imperfectly understood where Christianity does not hold sway. Doubtless government by the people received much attention among the classical nations of antiquity. Aristotle had such a deep insight into the needs of man as a social being, that his political conceptions are invaluable to the educationist as well as to the statesman. It is a fact, nevertheless, that in every Greek republic the labouring classes were slaves. The profound theories of Plato and the laws of Lycurgus show how greatly the ancient world had need of light.

Greece in its most illustrious times was governed by an oligarchy. Rome in its brightest period had little regard for the enslaved masses. The history of nations during the Middle Ages, and the conditions in Continental Europe to-day, prove how slow even people professing Christianity are to recognize the common Fatherhood of God. The great principles of modern Democracy have, however, made progress. The overthrow of the Stuarts in England, the American Revolution, the Reform Bill of 1832, and the Civil War in the United States are landmarks to encourage those who have faith in the progress of civilization.

We have rightly come to have an instinctive faith in the permanency of democratic institutions. The absence of such faith would be indicative of national decay. When we are asked to give reasons for believing that British power will be more enduring than that which dominated the world in any previous period, we are dismayed at the resources the other governments possessed. Their achievements did not, however, win for them stability or perpetuity. Athens for example had an art, a literature, and a philosophy, which have proved themselves immortal. Its sculpture and architecture are supreme in excellence. Philosophers, poets and statesmen in nations unborn when Greece was in her prime, receive inspiration and guid-

ance from the literature of Athens. Art and Literature are among the greater achievements of the human race, and yet they cannot of themselves safeguard the nation.

Forceful national qualities have also their advantages, but they did not save Rome from decay. Its great system of jurisprudence, which forms the basis of the public laws of nearly the entire civilized world, did not give durability to a powerful commonwealth. The Roman army has never been equalled as a fighting or a colonizing force, and yet military power had much to do with the destruction of the Republic and the decline and fall of the Empire. Rome also teaches conclusively by its transportation system, its aqueducts, its bridges, its temples and its palaces, that magnitude and splendor of public works have no tendency to guarantee national permanence. The Italian Republics are also not without their lessons. Venice, with its architecture of wonderful beauty, its art in painting, which holds still its prominence, its widespread commerce, which gave its citizens dignity, wealth, power and splendour, provided no security for the perpetuity of the state.

It would be a mistake to suppose that the power of religious enthusiasm can be relied on to give security to national institutions. The extraordinary vitality and persistence of the Hebrew religion did not give permanence to Judea. Moslem religious enthusiasm carried Arabic civilization through Africa into Spain, but this concentrated religious zeal did not save from destruction the cause which it championed. The history of Christian nations points to similar conclusions. More than once we are taught that zeal without knowledge may bring destruction. Spain, for example, had a united and fervent enthusiasm, but its once pre-eminent position in Europe is gone. It has languished, retrograded and lost its place among the leaders of civilization. It is not necessary to refer to the religious zeal of the first settlers of this Continent. Every reader of Parkman must admire the self-sacrificing determination of the Jesuits, but the Jesuits have never given permanence to systems of government. Too much importance is often assigned to the religious enthusiasm of the Pilgrim Fathers who landed on Plymouth Rock. Had not broader views and higher ideals taken possession of the people, the zeal alone of the early New Englanders might have made the history of Massachusetts not different in some respects from that of South Africa. A reference to the Boers affords much argument for this contention.

Splendid arts, noble literatures, extensive commerce, magnificent structures, strong and well-disciplined armies, and burning religious zeal have, therefore, not saved nations from decay and ruin. We have no reason to hope that the general diffusion of physical comforts, or the spread of material prosperity, will save the nation. Any diffusion of wealth which would make a people lazy, selfish, or sensual, has a deteriorating influence on nationality. The motives, affections, and passions of the people must be improved before any reliance can be placed on the power of a better physical well-being to become a source of public security. It is just here that many so-called reformers make a fundamental blunder. Improvement must come from within. This is the teaching of Christianity. This is the doctrine of true Democracy. This is a principle of Education which must be maintained. The socialist too often calls for legislation. The citizens are urged to control their representatives, while self-control is ten times more valuable to the state.

If the teaching of Christianity meets all human needs, there should be no misgivings regarding the future of our present civilization. Decay of the great nations of the past was due to a departure from sound ethical teachings. It is the task of Christian democracy to secure every individual his right, and to realize for any individual his worth. With Him, who said "even the very hairs of your head are all numbered" every person is of incalculable value. Christianity makes every man a member of the Kingdom of God. Democracy makes every man a citizen. How best to discharge his duties to the state, is the constant aim of each person who believes that "no one liveth to himself." "Ye are all members one of another" is as true to-day as in the time of the great Apostle of the Gentiles. Regarded as citizens, or as children of God, all men are essentially equal. A common loyalty is demanded of all. Christianity stands for the immortal worth of all men; all are the children of the same family. Democracy, like the Gospel, aims to bring all persons equally to their right and worth. The perpetuation of artificial class distinctions is as foreign to the genius of true democracy, as it is to Christianity. It should be remembered, however, that both Christianity and Democracy emphasize the variety of human endowments and functions, while they call for mutual co-operation. Democracy brings the strong into the service of the weak, and thus the lowest may be raised to a higher position. It dethrones an aristocracy which exists only to exact the service and homage of the weak. It retains in

power an aristocracy composed of the best elements of society. Indeed, true democracy will always be governed by true aristocracy. Christian democracy always impresses the best talents into the service of the state. Guided by conscience and enlightenment, it would not, and it could not, do away with the distinctions of great and less, which become more marked as society advances. No person is excused for doing his best, however, little. All men are not created equal notwithstanding what is stated in the American Declaration of Independence. People are not equal in physical powers, in intellectual endowments, or in energy. Those who speak of men being created equal, forget the distinctions of race and the varieties to be found even in the same family. They ignore the acknowledged facts of evolution and the laws of heredity. It is only in a savage state of society that men display few inequalities. As mankind advances differences become greater. In more highly civilized nations there is less approach to political, economic, social and intellectual equality. It should be accepted that inequality has been the condition of progress. A state of equality, if such were possible, would be a state of stagnation and a return to savagery. The theories of Bellamy are opposed to the first principles of man's social relations. The man with one talent and the man with ten talents will become more and more widely separated in their acquirements, if they make equal use of their opportunities. A larger co-operation and the constant betterment of all classes will, however, be the result. Educational processes encourage individuality ; and it should be a main object to enable persons of character, ability and energy to find or make opportunities by which they may rise to their proper level in the economic, professional or political scale. The same enjoyments and positions are not possible to all, because God has made men unlike. Improvement is, however, within everyone's reach. Each one should know what he can do, and what he may be, and strive for that with all his might.

Democracy demands a wide diffusion of political intelligence. When the divine right of kings had sway, the ignorance of the masses was possible. The basis of sovereignty has so widened that there is danger in allowing even a small section of the community to remain uneducated. According to Herbert Spencer, education is the preparation for complete living, and under our system of government, as everyone is expected to live with his fellows, fitness so to live is necessary. Only in community life is the highest type of

of individual life to be found. Education for the state demands the education of the individual. Participation in the public service should be regarded by every person as a duty and a privilege. There is danger to democratic institutions when the educated classes allow ignorant people to rule. The best way to purify politics is for each party to drive out its bad elements. Politics should attract the highest intelligence of the nation. If our educated men, I do not mean scholars, are not the leaders in politics, so much the worse for the nation.

The inculcation of patriotism is good, and there are times when patriotism may be best shown by singing "God Save the King" or by placing a flag on the school-house. It should not be forgotten, however, that instruction in civil government should not be limited to devices that lie merely on the surface. A thoroughly instructed and competent public opinion on national questions, calls for the best effort of teachers. Much of the disinclination to engage in active political life is due to the evil effects of treating public office as a reward for partisan activity. To turn over the care of great public interests to the camp-followers of a politician, looks like a return of barbarism. That a man is pulling the wires, in order to be appointed to a government position, should be conclusive evidence that no government is justified in appointing him. When our education becomes what it should be, it will lay proper emphasis on individual responsibility, and it will promote a patriotism that reaches farther than jingoism, drumbeating or flag-raising.

Education should inculcate the essential unity of all classes. In this way Democracy will be benefited by the endless diversity of function, capacity and achievement among individuals. The elevation of the masses should be a fundamental object of education in a democracy. All civilizing agencies should tend to benefit the poor, to elevate the down-trodden and to restore the wicked. Democratic education, like Christianity, should be primarily interested in those who need help. Every useful faculty, which any member of the community possesses, should be utilized for the benefit of society. On this continent the danger which confronts us is not aristocracy but plutocracy. It is a reflection on general intelligence that even some so-called intelligent people talk to-day of the evils of too many educated persons. Money is often lavishly expended for almost any public purpose except for paying teachers a fair salary. Even the great city of Toronto is having a fight with the School Board, in

which the point here mentioned is at stake. The contest is nominally over the interpretation of the law, but really a fight against free education.

The fight for free schools is well known. Step by step wealth and position have been forced to yield to democratic ideals of education. Gradually it is becoming acknowledged that no class of the population has an inherent right to the benefits which Christian civilization has placed within the reach of mankind. In Canada, the exaction of rate bills from children attending the elementary schools is a relic of past history. Some of us are old enough to remember the bitterness with which the Rev. Dr. Ryerson was assailed in his advocacy of free schools. One of the significant reforms, with which his name will ever be associated in the educational history of Canada, is the victory achieved for free schools just thirty years ago. In the United States the contest in behalf of popular education resembles in many respects that which took place in our own country. Victory there has, however, been more decisive, far-reaching and glorious than in the Dominion. Free education is regarded by American citizens as one of the greatest bulwarks of liberty, and one of the strongest assurances of the permanence of democratic institutions. England has shown its instincts in behalf of the masses of the people. Popular education thought long delayed, received its first great impetus in 1870, and its effects have revolutionized the economic, social, and to some extent, the political condition of the country.

An experience of thirty years has probably made all classes acquiesce in the justice of free elementary education. The fight for free secondary schools has been going on for some time. In some countries the cause has already triumphed, in others steady advances are being made, while in some places the fight is at its highest. Many of the arguments used against free public schools, are used against free High Schools. It is claimed that it is not the duty of the State to furnish, at public expense, education, any more than food or clothing. The weakness of this line of argument it is not necessary to discuss before an educated audience. It is held also that young people, if they receive from the State free elementary education would be better served by leaving them to secure, by their own efforts, means to obtain secondary or higher education. It is strange to find that rich men seldom act on this principle regarding the education of their own children. They know full well that unless young persons attend a High School at a certain age, they will never

secure the advantages of secondary education. To the honour of the American nation, free High schools have become almost universal, and the most progressive states are those in which the best facilities are provided for secondary education. Scotland has long been famous for its appreciation of educational advantages. The princely gifts of Andrew Carnegie to the Universities of Scotland, show how well a shrewd business man understands the advantages of free education.

England is now passing through a struggle, regarding secondary education, which reminds one of the bitterness preceding the passage of Mr. Foster's Bill of 1870. The now celebrated Cockerton case has placed England in a perfect ferment. The judicial decision, which would deprive School Boards of the privileges of maintaining higher grade schools and continuation classes, as they have been doing for some years past, would appear to be the "beginning of the end." Never before were the masses of the people so greatly aroused, and it has only been by concession after concession that the Government, with its immense majority, has been able to satisfy its friends. It is safe to believe that the rights of the people will triumph, and that School Boards will eventually secure full freedom in providing, at the public expense, if the locality so desires, free secondary education, as it now does free elementary education.

To Canada the situation in England and in the United States has its lessons. "Down by the sea" the people have, with commendable intelligence, followed the policy of New England in having free High Schools. In Ontario, the wealthiest province of the Dominion, freedom is given to localities to have free High Schools if thought advisable. Unfortunately in many cities and towns the wealthier classes have opposed the abolition of fees. Brighter days are, however, dawning. In many localities free High Schools prevail. The city of Toronto has done away with fees in the First Forms of its Collegiate Institutes, and it may be hoped the time is not far distant when the intelligent province of Ontario will yield to the democratic spirit of the age in having every High School and Collegiate Institute free to resident pupils.

Under modern views of citizenship the work of universities must be brought into touch with the masses of the people. The courses of study must be adapted to the requirements of the present day. Sectarian colleges are not suited to the liberal religious views of our times. Old institutions like those of Oxford and Cambridge, are

now wide open to dissenters. The German Universities make no distinction between Catholic and Lutheran, and the American Universities are noted for their freedom from denominational restrictions. From the views here set forth the atmosphere of a University must, however, be Christian as well as democratic. It must be accessible to all classes, and it is unfortunate that in many cases, although religious tests have disappeared, money tests are still a bar to admission. Very often the wealthier an institution becomes, the higher the fees for students. If a University is accessible only to the wealthy it does not deserve the name of a state institution. Higher institutions of learning are worth more to the state than they cost. When there is such rage for wealth every patriot should urge such a University policy as will reach the people.

Democracy should emphasize moral training in all educational efforts. Too often it is assumed that knowledge and education are identical. Growth in morals has not kept pace with growth in knowledge. In spite of much ethical progress, every day brings to notice instances of intemperance, dishonesty and untruthfulness. In public life charges of corruption, bribery and intimidation are too prevalent. It should be settled that high moral principle is essential for every public position. France is a powerful illustration of the evils that result from exalting the intellectual at the expense of the moral element in education. Domestic life should be carefully guarded. In every home the flame of patriotism, of purity, of righteousness, and of the higher life, should be fed constantly by parents. We have no guarantee of the permanency of democracy unless the doctrines set forth in the "Sermon on the Mount" are maintained. The avenues for prominence in social, industrial and political positions should be closed to men not noted for rectitude. High qualifications, not simply in scholarship but in power to mould character, should be demanded of teachers. Scholarship, without moral power, should qualify for no University professorship. Teachers should become leaders in every movement that has for its object the moral elevation of the people.

The opinion here mentioned, and the end to be obtained, may appear high. It should be understood, however, that only with a standard of this kind can our system of government acquire stability. Unless democracy is guided by Christian principles, our boasted civilization must, like that of the nations of antiquity, pass away. No progress in mere intelligence, and no zeal for Imperialism, can save

us from the fate of other great nations. No patriotism is worthy of the name which rests upon any platform lower than the one proclaimed nearly two thousand years ago by the Founder of Christian civilization. Puritanism, and not military success is the force which has made the British nation what it is to-day. Puritanism is characteristic of the best elements in both the Roman Catholic and the Protestant churches. As thus understood Puritanism is the salt of Democracy.

The future of Democracy is, however, hopeful. The press and the pulpit are powerful agencies for righteousness. The taste for good literature is improving. The danger of an ignorant electorate is demanding better educational facilities. An election campaign, though it exposes much that is bad, develops intelligence and character. Party managers are beginning to see the wisdom of putting in the field candidates of unsullied reputation. The platforms of both parties differs much less than formerly. The question for the electorate is becoming a choice of men, rather than a choice of measures. If righteousness counts we need have no fear of the out-look. If we believe in God, we should believe in men.
